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ABSTRACT

This report analyzes a test in Hebrew phonetic reading administered to students of the junior high school at Congregation Beth Yeshurun in April and May 1975. There was a progressive improvement in reading rate in each grade: Junior High 1 students averaged 38.7 words per minute; Junior High 2 students averaged 47.3 words per minute; and Junior High 3 students averaged 51.8 words per minute. The experimental testing program produced the following recommendations: (1) Reading tests should be administered on an annual basis; (2) Results of the tests should be reported to parents; (3) A curriculum for instruction in phonetic reading needs to be developed; (4) The junior high program ought to divide students differently in English-based studies, such as history, and Hebrew-based studies, such as prayers, to account for differences in levels of skill; and (5) Although English reading scores and Hebrew reading scores show a poor co-efficient of correlation, they may be used effectively for points of comparison in counselling. The report concludes with a list of technological developments that may be easily and inexpensively incorporated into a reading curriculum. (Author/AM)

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A STUDY OF
HEBREW PHONETIC-READING COMPETENCE
AMONG JUNIOR HIGH STUDENTS
AT CONGREGATION BETH YESHURUN

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WILLIAM S. MALEV SCHOOLS FOR RELIGIOUS STUDIES

A PROJECT SPONSORED BY THE EXCELLENCE-IN-EDUCATION
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A Study of Hebrew Phonetic Reading Competence Among Junior High Students at Congregation Beth Yeshurun

ABSTRACT

THIS REPORT analyzes a test in Hebrew phonetic reading administered to students of the Junior High School in April and May 1975. There is a progressive improvement in reading rate in each grade:

Junior High 1 students average 38.7 Words-per-Minute.

Junior High 2 students average 47.3 Words-per-Minute.

Junior High 3 students average 51.8 Words-per-Minute.

The experimental testing program produced the following recommendations:

Reading tests should be administered on an annual basis.

Results of the tests should be reported to parents.

A curriculum for instruction in phonetic reading needs to be developed.

The Junior High program ought to divide students differently in English-based studies, such as history, and Hebrew-based studies, such as prayers, to account for differences in levels of skill.

Although English reading scores and Hebrew reading scores show a poor co-efficient of correlation, they may be used effectively for points of comparison in counselling.

The report concludes with a list of technological developments that may be easily and inexpensively incorporated into a reading curriculum.

A Study of Hebrew Phonetic Reading Competence Among Junior High Students at Congregation Beth Yeshurun

ABSTRACT

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A STUDY OF HEBREW PHONETIC-READING COMPETENCE AMONG JUNIOR HIGH STUDENTS AT CONGREGATION BETH YESHURUN

By Irving N. Rothman, Ph.D.

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

THIS STUDY of Hebrew phonetic reading among junior high school students at Congregation Beth Yeshurun is a consequence of experimentation in competency-based learning modules, authorized by the Excellence-in-Education Committee early in 1973. It became evident early in the development of individually-guided learning modules that teachers were in need of guidelines for the design and development of units in history, prayer, and language. They needed to know the class level at which separate learning modules were to be pitched. This required knowledge of English reading ability and student competence in Hebrew.

Such information was not available in the school at the beginning of the program, nor are such statistics of class or individual norms in Hebrew presently maintained in the school. This is a phenomenon not unusual in afternoon Hebrew education in the United States. Thus, teachers were required to write their modules on the basis of their individual teaching assignments; they adopted nominal guidelines based upon their past classroom experience and were asked to pitch modules toward grade levels they were generally accustomed to teach.

Necessity of the Reading Study

In the testing of learning modules, conducted in November and December 1974, teachers encountered problems in basic reading skills that had not been anticipated. A number of students were unable to begin study through learning modules because they read Hebrew phonetics poorly or not at all. Evaluators were unable to test modules in certain Sunday School classes where Hebrew phonetic reading is deleted from the course requirements, even though students of a comparable age in the afternoon Hebrew school are expected to study Hebrew. Conversely, some modules proved too simple for advanced students who had achieved a high level of phonetic reading competence in Hebrew. Thus, the need became apparent for an instrument to assess reading ability. The Hebrew Phonetic-Reading Study was initiated on the basis of a recommendation to the Excellence-in-Education Committee in my preliminary report of January 9, 1975, "to derive significant comparative statistics" and "to identify the reading scores of all youngsters in the testing program " ("Evaluation," Item 15, p, 5).

Limitations of the Reading Study

Although the original commission for the study was a broad one, the activity of the study restricted itself to three objectives:

1. to devise an easily-administered test in Hebrew reading,
2. to determine a quantifiable scale for the measurement of a student's ability to read Hebrew phonetics, and
3. to determine if a correlation existed between the ability to read English phonetics and the ability to read Hebrew phonetics.

Limitations of the Reading Study (cont'd.)

In addition to evaluating the scores produced in this study, this report also provides a series of recommendations for the development of a reading curriculum in the Congregation Beth Yeshurun schools and a list of relatively inexpensive technological tools for use in a reading program.

It is necessary to caution of the limitations of this present study. It does not purport to treat the content of curriculum, reading comprehension, parental background, student intelligence, independent motivation, student languor in the afternoon hours, or the quality of supervision, nor does it attempt to assess the objectives and methods of teachers in the school system. Systematic studies are doubtless needed of such matters in order to understand the deeper implications of the present analysis of phonetic reading, but such studies have yet to be initiated. This study is limited in scope. It is restricted to the words-per-minute a student can read correctly, based upon a newly-devised reading instrument.

Because several conclusions of this study may prove controversial, readers are obliged to recognize that this is a first step at Beth Yeshurun in the development of a methodology for the systematic analysis of student achievement in basic skills. One advantage of individual learning programs is the demand they impose upon school administrators to establish referential norms of behavior. We ought to know the number of words-per-minute students in the separate grades are expected to read as a minimum level of competence or achievement. Such norms provide guidelines for classroom assignments, curricular goals, and levels of teaching.

Utilization of the Study

The study of Hebrew phonetic reading will appear useful when the Education Committee decides upon the need for a systematic analysis of the achievements of students in basic skills. The report will prove helpful when the school administration implements part or all of its suggestions. While Hebrew schools generally employ intuitive and subjective modes of assessment of student performance, the expertise is available to develop systematic testing instruments in Hebrew education. The science of testing and measurement in Hebraic studies is so underdeveloped as to provide a negligible bibliography. Nevertheless, one has only to examine two important articles in the 1967 Yearbook of the Educators' Assembly of the United Synagogue of America to realize the serious thought devoted to problems of contemporary education, particularly Dr. Eliezer L. Ehrmann's "Reflections on the Teaching of Jewish History in the High School" (pp. 61-70) and Dr. Martin Goldstein's "The Motivations of High School Students" (pp. 148-59) with critiques and a survey by Israel Ribner and Isaac Levitats.

Members of congregational education committees need ask themselves whether the issues raised in either of these articles have been discussed in recent years. Educators and laymen need answer for themselves whether their school systems have established specific programs of testing and measurement to analyze the development of such curricular and instructional techniques as are articulated in these studies. Recent efforts to establish accountability in secular studies indicate the concern for evaluating performance is a significant area of research in the field of education.

The Study urges consideration of broader issues that lie properly within the province of the Education Committee of the Congregation in its responsibility to authorize the construction of a comprehensive curriculum:

1. Are all students in the school system required to read Hebrew phonetics?
2. Barring visual orders such as dyslexia, at what age are students expected to begin the study of Hebrew reading?
3. What levels of reading competence are expected of students at various grades?
4. What level of reading competence is deemed necessary for a student to begin Bar-Mitzvah training, including preparation for Haftarah and Torah reading?
5. Ought students be graduated from the William S. Malev Religious Schools who lack minimum competence in Hebrew phonetic reading?
6. What systems have been developed to teach reading to students who enter the school system in their late years without basic competence in reading, according to statistical norms?
7. Has the Congregation a need for a remedial reading program in Hebrew for junior-high level students?
8. Should classes be divided by phonetic-reading ability when students are involved in Hebrew reading or Hebrew language study?
9. To what extent will the knowledge of phonetic-reading competence necessitate a reorganization of the curriculum?
10. Does the present curriculum provide alternate study paths for students who are slow readers, medium-paced readers, or fast readers?
11. What alternative texts in each class level--pamphlets, newspapers, or books--are currently available to supplement classroom study for those who have the capability to complete standard assignments at an early date in the regular school year?
12. To what extent does the present reading curriculum demonstrate the commitment of the administration to a multi-paced, individually-oriented open-concept system of education to take advantage of the new open-concept facility?

Toward a Permanent Testing Instrument

The Hebrew phonetic-reading test outlined in this study suggests the practical possibility of developing a valid testing instrument that may be used as a permanent tool for measurement and analysis in the Beth Yeshurun school system. Under the circumstances, where no such test currently exists in the school, it appears worthwhile to institute new testing procedures to help determine minimum levels of performance in basic skills expected of students at various grade levels. The school has a first obligation to establish its own set of testing norms.

This report also encourages the establishment of a reading test on a national level for the purpose of understanding reliable norms of reading behavior in a larger cross-section of students. One argument against such a national test is the variety of Hebrew schools in this country. Some emphasize "davening" of prayers; others, audio-lingual approaches to Hebrew study. The same argument enters into the evaluation of national school achievement tests and scores. The scores of students in Mexican-American communities, where the native language is Spanish, differ from those of graduates of Boston Latin Grammar Schools, who are enrolled in accelerated English-reading programs and have completed four years of study in classical Latin. The problem in using national reading tests lies with the difficulty in obtaining a universally valid instrument to test reading averages at each grade level and also with interpretation. If the tests are interpreted in consideration of the objectives of each school, administrators may find them a source of important statistical information for the organization of classes in the study of prayers or the Hebrew language, regardless of unique differences in school systems which the testing instrument might not recognize.

Summary

This report is in no way intended as a criticism of Hebrew education, nor does it fault present methods of class organization. It asserts that schools wishing to write open-concept programs have an obligation to construct and use evaluative instruments which will help in the development and utilization of instructional learning modules. During the past two years, Congregation Beth Yeshurun has martialled its resources for the purpose of experimentation with competency-based learning. If efforts are to continue in this direction, the school has the sustained need to identify levels of competence required of students at various grade levels in such rudimentary skills as Hebrew phonetics.

If the school administration continues present practice of grouping slow students with fast students, as indicated in this study, for whatever reasons it offers in justification of this policy, all the more reason exists for the continued development of competency-based individually-prescribed learning modules which programs admit a variety of learning paths. Such modules enable students to proceed at their own pace of study.

Indications are that students and teachers desire alternative modes of instruction. Whether teaching practices include formal classroom instruction, individually-prescribed learning modules, packaged audio-visual programs, or field study, school districts and local communities are seeking a measure of accountability. The establishment of reading norms is one valid response. (Note Roger B. Worner, Designing Curriculum for Educational Accountability from Continuous Progress Education Through PBS [N.Y.: Random House, 1973]).

THE HEBREW PHONETIC-READING TEST

Testing Period

IN APRIL AND MAY 1975, Congregation Beth Yeshurun administered SRA English Reading tests and a newly-designed Hebrew Phonetic-Reading test to students of the school.

Results

The results of this testing are restricted in this report to junior high students in the afternoon Hebrew School who are enrolled in the 6th, 7th, 8th, and 9th grades in secular public schools.

1. A three-part test was designed to examine reading competence in (A) elementary Hebrew words and sentences, (B) prayers, and (C) words and sentences in the Bible. [Attached]

2. An average reading rate at words-per-minute (WPM) was computed at each grade level. The rate is tentatively fixed and ought to be computed anew each year based upon broader samplings.

3. No practical correlation exists between the ability of a student to read English phonetics and his ability to read Hebrew phonetics. The correlation nevertheless suggests relationships that may prove useful in guidance and counselling. [See Correlation.]

Recommendations

1. The Hebrew Phonetic-Reading test, as revised, should be commercially-printed and administered in a professional format.

2. The reading test should be administered to the entire school to compute an average reading rate at each grade level.

3. The average reading rate computed periodically should provide the basis for placement of individual students in Hebrew study groups and for assignment in homogeneous groupings.

Recommendations (cont'd.)

4. The Junior High program ought to divide students differently in English-based studies, such as history, and Hebrew-based studies, such as prayers, to account for differences in levels of skill. This is particularly necessary to avoid disparities among students studying Hebrew-dependent subjects.

5. The Junior High curriculum ought to develop a program of remedial reading instruction for students who lack competence in Hebrew phonetics. Levels of competence are to be based upon statistics compiled in reading tests.

6. An effort need be made to ensure regular attendance in the afternoon Junior High program to enable reasonable progress in reading-rate improvement.

7. Parents ought to be apprised of the reading rate of their children as a designation of achievement or lack of achievement.

Design

The Project Director designed a tri-partite examination which included diverse reading samples. The test was reviewed by Mrs. Devorah Arbisser, Hebrew School Principal, who substituted a more difficult passage in prayers for the Sh'ma [שמע] which had been originally proposed. The test comprised the following parts:

A. Elementary words from the primer עברית א [KTAV, 1971]---113 words

B. Prayer in the Siddur [לדוד מזמור. ליי הארץ ומלואה]---140 words

C. Opening passage in Genesis[בראשית ברא אלהים את השמים]---228 words

Parts B and C were relatively difficult, and no student was able to read all words in these passages in the allotted time. Part A was restricted to 113 words, but the selection needs to be increased to 200 words, for a number of students read the entire passage of 113 words before the expiration of one minute, and a true upper-level limit could not be determined for the best readers. [Test Attached].

Administration of Hebrew and English Tests

Upon the recommendation of Day School Principal Dr. Jane Flavin the SRA Reading Record was selected as an appropriate instrument for the measurement of skills in English reading. The limited application of the test mandated administering two parts of the four-part instrument: Part A "Reading Rate" and Part B "Comprehension." SRA Parts A and B were administered on a class-by-class basis by Miss Marilyn Levitch on Tuesday, April 22, Thursday, April 24, and Tuesday, May 8, 1975.

The Hebrew Phonetic-Reading Test was designed in January 1975 and revised and mimeographed in February for distribution to classroom teachers. The school administration authorized teachers to conduct the testing in the last week of school in May. Teachers tested their students orally on an individual basis. Students were not given the opportunity to rehearse the passages prior to the administration of the examination. Students were not informed of the passages prior to the oral testing, and sources of the passages were not identified on the testing instruments. The test was administered by the teachers to exact a spontaneous oral reading response from their students.

Because the Hebrew test is narrowly focused upon skill in phonetic-reading of words and phrases, comparison with the SRA Reading Record was restricted to Part A "Reading Rate"; Part B "Comprehension" was discarded as a factor in this study.

Scoring

SRA percentile scores are computed in the "Conversion Tables for the SRA Reading Record."

A simple formula was utilized for estimating words-per-minute in the Hebrew Phonetic-Reading Test. Teachers added the number of words the student read in each minute test. Errors counted at twice the value of words accurately read and were subtracted from the total score. The formula has been widely used by Jewish educators in the past and is easily recognized:

Where W = No. of Words-per-Minute (WPM)
E = Errors
S = Reading Score
Σ = Cumulative Total

then a minute-long Hebrew Phonetic-Reading Test is scored

$$W - 2E = S$$

or a person reading 60 WPM with 8 errors scores at 44 WPM:

$$60 - 2X8 = [60-16] = 44$$

Because the score on the Hebrew Phonetic Reading Test is the cumulative score of three 1-minute tests, the formula adds total WPM, subtracts total errors, and divides by 3 for the final score:

$$\frac{\Sigma W\ (A + B + C) - \Sigma 2E\ (A + B + C)}{3} = S$$

For example, a teacher scoring a student on the three tests would list the following results:

HEBREW PHONETIC READING TEST	1-minute A--Elementary			1-minute B-Prayers			1-minute C-Bible			Cumulative WPM		
STUDENT	W	E	S	W	E	S	W	E	S	W	E	S
Ralph Gordon	60	8	44	38	4	30	52	7	38	150	19	37.3

Ralph Gordon reads at a rate of 37.3 words-per-minute :

$$\frac{(60 + 38 + 52) - 2 X (8 + 4 + 7)}{3} = 37.3 \text{ WPM}$$

Statistics

Students of Hebrew Junior High 1, 2, and 3

No. Students enrolled in Jr. High Afternoon Hebrew	175	
No. Students tested in English Reading Rate--SRA	98	56.0 %
No. Students tested in Hebrew Phonetic-Reading	82	46.9 %
No. Students Tested in both English and Hebrew	[illegible]	34.9 %

Average Words-Per-Minute (WPM)--Hebrew

HEBREW SCHOOL LEVEL	PUBLIC SCHOOL LEVEL	NUMBER OF STUDENTS	TEST A-WPM ELEMENTARY	TEST B-WPM PRAYERS	TEST C-WPM BIBLE	CUMULATIVE WPM
JH 1	6	21	55.2	25.0	35.3	38.7
JH 2	7	42	65.4	32.3	42.3	47.3
JH 3*	8	13	72.2	33.9	47.0	51.8
MEAN		76	65.2	33.2	41.8	46.9

* Junior High scores exclude those 8th-grade students who had accepted the option at Beth Yeshurun of transferring from the afternoon Hebrew School to the Hillel program, which is a more advanced high school program.

Average Errors-Per-Minute (EPM)--Hebrew

HEBREW SCHOOL LEVEL	PUBLIC SCHOOL LEVEL	NUMBER OF STUDENTS	ERRORS PER MINUTE
JH 1	6	21	2.92
JH 2	7	42	5.11
JH 3	8	13	4.38
MEAN		76	4.11

Range of Scores

HEBREW SCHOOL LEVEL	PUBLIC SCHOOL LEVEL	NO. STU.	HEBREW SCHOOL TEACHER	ENGLISH PERCENTILE SCORE low	high	mean	%	HEBREW CUMULATIVE WORDS-PER-MINUTE low	high	mean	
1	6,7(1)	9	Feigon	16	93	55.8	%	0.7	15.3	11.2	WPM
1	6,7(1)	8	Gil	49	95.5	71.9	%	18.0	41.0	33.9	WPM
1	6	11	Sidikaro	65	96.5	85.8	%	62.0	94.0	83.9	WPM
1	6,7(1)	15	Y. Dagoni	29	99	71.0	%	Class not tested			
2	7	11	Mucasey	27	92.5	63.9	%	13.7	51.7	28.5	WPM
2	7	12	Hodes	25	99+	77.2	%	30.7	70.0	52.4	WPM
2	6(1),7	14	Weinstein	29	96	70.6	%	31.3	101.3	55.2	WPM
2	6(1),7	10	Rosenthal	30	98	74.1	%	33.3	68.0	57.0	WPM
3	8,9(1)	16	R. Dagoni	01	99+	59.1	%	16.0	60.3	37.3	WPM
3	8	14	Y. Sagi	03	99+	65.5	%	31.7	93.3	64.1	WPM
3	8	11	Borik	18	98.5	64.3	%	Testing Incomplete			

The Jr. High 1 is grouped exceptionally well according to ability levels in Hebrew phonetic reading. There is no overlap. Students reading below sixteen WPM are in one class. Students reading above sixty WPM are assigned to a separate class. Those between are in a different class. According to school officials, the grouping was accidental rather than purposeful, though fortuitous.

Jr. High 2 appears to have been divided without regard to reading ability; there is overlap in each class in spite of the fact that one class has a considerably lower reading average than the others.

Junior High 3 was divided strictly by alphabet according to the student's last name.

Correlation

There appears to be no practical correlation between scores in Test A "Reading Rate" of the SRA Reading Record and scores in the Hebrew Phonetic-Reading Test. Students reading Hebrew at a rate of 60 WPM or better average in the 79th percentile in English. Students reading Hebrew at a rate of 30 WPM or less average in the 51st percentile. As with the range of scores, however, averages do not reveal the unpredictable correlation of the scores. The following sample of seventh-grade scores (Junior High 2) shows students in low percentiles reading Hebrew with fluency and those in high English percentiles reading relatively slowly:

7TH GRADE SAMPLING [JUNIOR HIGH 2]

Hebrew WPM	English Percentiles
10-20 WPM	16th, 52nd, 60th, 68th
25-35 WPM	47th, 60th, 80th, 91nd
40-49 WPM	25th, 44th, 96th, 99+
50-59 WPM	20th, 68th, 75th, 80th, 90th, 96th
60-69 WPM	28th, 80th, 90th, 98th
70 WPM	75th, 86th
100 WPM	90th

[Note: students in the afternoon Hebrew program, public school grades 6-9, average cumulatively in the 69th percentile; exactly 68.84]

Co-efficient of Correlation

[This section of the study entitled "Co-efficient of Correlation" is by Mr. Rick Nelson, former teacher in the Day School of the Congregation. Mr. Nelson computed the statistical correlations of sixty-one (61) students tested in both their English reading rate and Hebrew reading rate and offers the following interpretation of these findings.]

Hebrew School Grade	No. of Students	Mean Score English Percentile	Mean Score Hebrew WPM	Co-efficient of Correlation
JH 1	14	66.50	47.86	.64
JH 2	37	71.45	48.40	.19
JH 3	10	56.85	46.06	.18
JUNIOR HIGH	61	67.93	47.89	.29

The co-efficient of correlation for Junior High 1 (.64) indicates a strong positive relationship between English reading ability and Hebrew reading performance. This indicator is significant at the .05 level. The correlations for the other grades are low (Junior High 2 at .19 and Junior High 3 at .18). These data suggest that English reading ability is an unreliable predictor of an individual's Hebrew reading performance.

The Junior High 1 results may be aprtially explained by the homogeneous grouping of Junior High 1 students. Students grouped by reading level in Hebrew were relatively compatible and able to proceed in their study without pressures which were inherent in other classes.

Co-efficient of Correlation (cont'd.)

Motivation ought to be viewed as a major factor in progress in the afternoon Hebrew School. Motivation in each Junior High 1 class may have been higher than in other grade levels, for students were not held back by slower classmates or embarrassed by much faster readers. Another important factor is the large number of students in Junior High 1 who are in preparation for their Bar-Mitzvah or Bat-Mitzvah ceremonies. Older students may show less interest in religious studies. This growing disinterest at the upper levels, coupled with less instructional emphasis on Hebrew reading, may have contributed to the low correlations. Not only is the motivational factor a concern, but teachers consciously or unconsciously direct attention at a single-level of instruction, which is an easier task in homogeneous grouping. Junior High 1 classes were grouped homogeneously in 1974-75, albeit accidentally.

The statistics indicate that future instructional planning should focus primarily on Hebrew achievement and not upon English percentile scores, with the following qualifiers. English ability, as measured by the SRA Reading Rate, could possibly be used to identify individual students who are scoring in Hebrew below their capability. For example, a student in the 99th percentile in English scoring 11 points below the mean in Hebrew suggests an anomalous situation. Students with low English percentiles who score high in their Hebrew reading performance ought to receive praise for their achievements.

--R. Nelson

Recommendations for Reading Improvement -- Curriculum

Educational psychologists need provide the rationale to explain why some students in high English percentiles read Hebrew poorly and why others in low English percentiles read Hebrew well. Motivation is possibly the best explanation. Home background is important. Educators are obliged, nevertheless, to entertain additional premises that might affect practices in the classroom.

1. The school administration should articulate a theory of instruction in Hebrew reading and offer teachers written guidelines for student development. This includes a continuous program of in-service training sessions, rather than a single session at the beginning of the year. It requires a step-by-step model for instruction in Hebrew phonetics. An established curricula is needed at different grade levels. Prescribed word lists should be provided at each grade level.
2. The student's permanent record should note his reading rate and reading level each year. Parents ought to be informed of the student's reading rate each year.
3. The number of errors recorded in upper-level grades in this experiment indicates that teachers may take for granted the student's reading skill; attention should be paid to the development of basic reading skills even at grade levels where phonetic reading is not normally stressed.

Recommendations for Reading Improvement (cont'd.)

4. It seems reasonable to assume that a student reading English with fluency at an early age may become bored with repetitive learning techniques of the traditional classroom if he begins to read Hebrew at the relatively late age of 9 or 10 years. Repetitive drills are essential to language study and to the improvement of reading skill. Therefore, the school needs to provide a variety of techniques in repetitive drill. On the other hand, a slow English reader who is accustomed to daily exercises in public school may accommodate more easily to the same techniques in Hebrew School and learn to read well.
5. Experienced teachers in Hebrew instruction need be recruited. An assessment of teaching salaries and other benefits need be made to provide Hebrew teachers with the same standard of living that secular teachers enjoy.

While the principles of reading instruction are generally known, they have not yet been incorporated in a specially-designed syllabus involving a directed program of reading development. Considerable technology is currently available, and congregations such as Beth Yehsurun have the resources to incorporate technical aids in a systematic reading program. The following items can be incorporated into a planned curriculum at minimal expense once a curriculum has been developed:

Recommendations for Reading Improvement -- Technology

Item 1: C. Castberg and Lillian W. Adler, Reading Hebrew (Sefardi): A Programmed Instruction Book. N.Y.: Behrman House, Inc., Publishers, 1966.

Nothing in the field equals the high quality of this programmed book. Written for persons who can follow instructions in English, it is effective for ten, eleven, and twelve-year-old students, teenagers, and adults; also for bright six-year-old youngsters. If an instructor starts with Bar-Mitzvah-age students, he can teach them to read Hebrew phonetically within a weekend if he follows through and reviews with them. Cost-- $1.50 per book.

Item 2: The Overhead Projector.

At least one experienced teacher in Houston has found it possible to teach Hebrew reading more quickly and with better overall results by reproducing all pages of her Hebrew primer on transparencies. Instead of having the students look in their books while she reads, she has everybody focus on the screen behind her, following her finger as it moves visibly on the page while she pronounces words and invites students to pronounce words. Excellent for first and second graders. Cost--40 cents per page with black-line transparencies; 6 cents per page with white-line transparencies; $1.50 per page with Xerox color transparencies.

Recommendations for Reading Improvement (cont'd.)

Item 3: "Talking Typewriter"

While congregations do not normally own an IBM-designed computer-operated talking typewriter, portable Hebrew typewriters or standard Hebrew typewriters may be used to enhance reading instruction. [Congregation Beth Yeshurun houses 3 portable Hebrew typewriters in the Learning Resource Center and one standard typewriter in the school office.] The same principles apply here as with the IBM talking typewriter. Allow elementary school students or students with reading disability to type Hebrew words on the typewriters. Mimeograph a sheet of paper with Hebrew words on it. Then have students type words in parallel columns. Let them use the hunt-and-peck system. They will be pleased to see the words pop out at them on the typed page. Teachers can easily discover and correct student errors. Cost--portable typewriters, $ 175.00 each.

Item 4: Magnetic Card Readers

Teachers ought to isolate difficult words in individual prayers or passages from the Bible and hand-print them on magnetic-tape cards. Seconds are required to record the correct pronunciation on each card. Magnetic cards have been used with success in the nursery school at Beth Yeshurun; they have been incorporated with equal success in competency-based prayer modules in the 4th and 6th-grade classes in the Day School and in programs of instruction in Torah and Haftarah trop. Cost--$9.50 per 100 cards; commercially-produced reader-recorders at approximately $250.

Item 5: I/CT Vu-Mate

This hand-held tachistoscope enables teachers to map teaching programs in word recognition. The task of preparation is relatively simple. With a magic marker, write words on blank ruled cards. Slip cards into the tachistoscope and have students identify words as they are flashed mechanically. Cost--Vu-Mate, $10 each; blank cards, $5 per 100. Instructional/Communications Technology, Inc.

Item 6: Sound-on-page Recorder-Readers

These machines play 4-minute discs laminated to the back of a blank page. Preparation is achieved in four steps: (1) xerox a prayer from the siddur, (2) number each line consecutively, (3)paste the prayer on the blank sheet, and (4) record the prayer, informing the student each time he is to begin a new numbered line. The student will direct his attention to the printed line as he listens to the recorded reading of the line. Synchronization is solved. Each blank page with magnetic-film backing costs approximately one dollar. Copies can be reproduced on special equipment. Machinery is expensive-- $ 349 for each recorder-player; $ 299 for each player. Results are worth the expenditure. 3M Sound-Page System, Model 626AGD.

Item 7: Language Laboratory

Studies are ambivalent about the value of a language laboratory. Disadvantages and advantages appear to balance each other, which calls into question the expense of installation. One author is dubious about language laboratories:

Item 7: Language Laboratory (cont'd.)

> The predicted benefits have not materialized [and] students have been unable to respond automatically; . . . Once the novelty of the lab disappears . . . some students form an intense dislike for the lab sessions. Others are uninspired, disinterested, and inattentive. One of the major problems in many labs is how to control the vandalism.

On the other hand:

> the lab still provides a place in which all the students can practice simultaneously in relative isolation from other students. And the lab still makes it possible for the teacher to listen to individual responses and to work with individual students without interrupting the practice of other students, in Kenneth Chastain, "The Language Laboratory," The Development of Modern Language Skills: Theory to Practice (Philadelphia: The Center for Curriculum Development, Inc., 1971), 397-404.

Because software does not exist for instruction in Hebrew reading, a school installing a language laboratory is obliged (1) to develop a one-year or first-year series of reading tapes to be coordinated with new reading materials, and (2) to train instructors to use the equipment well.

A less expensive answer is the purchase of 20 heavy-duty Wollensak tape recorders @ $150 each. The teacher is obliged in this system to develop a series of reading tapes. Testing consists of calling students aside for several minutes each to evaluate their progress and time their reading rate.

With the exception of the language laboratory, none of the equipment listed above requires special training to operate. None of the innovations requires unwieldy technology or expensive software. These items have the benefit of requiring teachers to work with students on an individual basis, altering traditional techniques such as reading in unison.

FUTURE TESTING

This study of Hebrew phonetic-reading suggests the value of periodic and sustained testing of reading competence in the afternoon Hebrew school. To study periodic progress, these tests should be administered at each grade level toward the end of the Spring Semester. Annual administration of these tests will help establish a valid set of norms for learning activity at Congregation Beth Yeshurun. It will afford a record of comparative scores that may prove useful in determining class placement and classroom organization at the beginning of the school year. The following program is recommended for future testing:

SPRING SEMESTER	1. Review the testing instrument. 2. Select new passages for testing. --Elementary words in a primer [225 wds] --Prayers in the Siddur [225 words] --Passage in the Torah [225 words] 3. Print the test attractively with a cover sheet detailing instructions for administration and scoring. 4. Train two or three individuals to administer the test to all classes on a pre-arranged schedule.
[Item 3 is significant. Print by Itek or some professional method. There must be no impairment of readability as one might experience from ditto sheets.]	
MAY	1. Administer the tests. 2. Score individual tests.
JUNE	1. Compute Statistics. 2. Analyze Statistics. 3. Derive norms and standards.
AUGUST	Utilize in the organization of classes.